

The President's Daily Brief

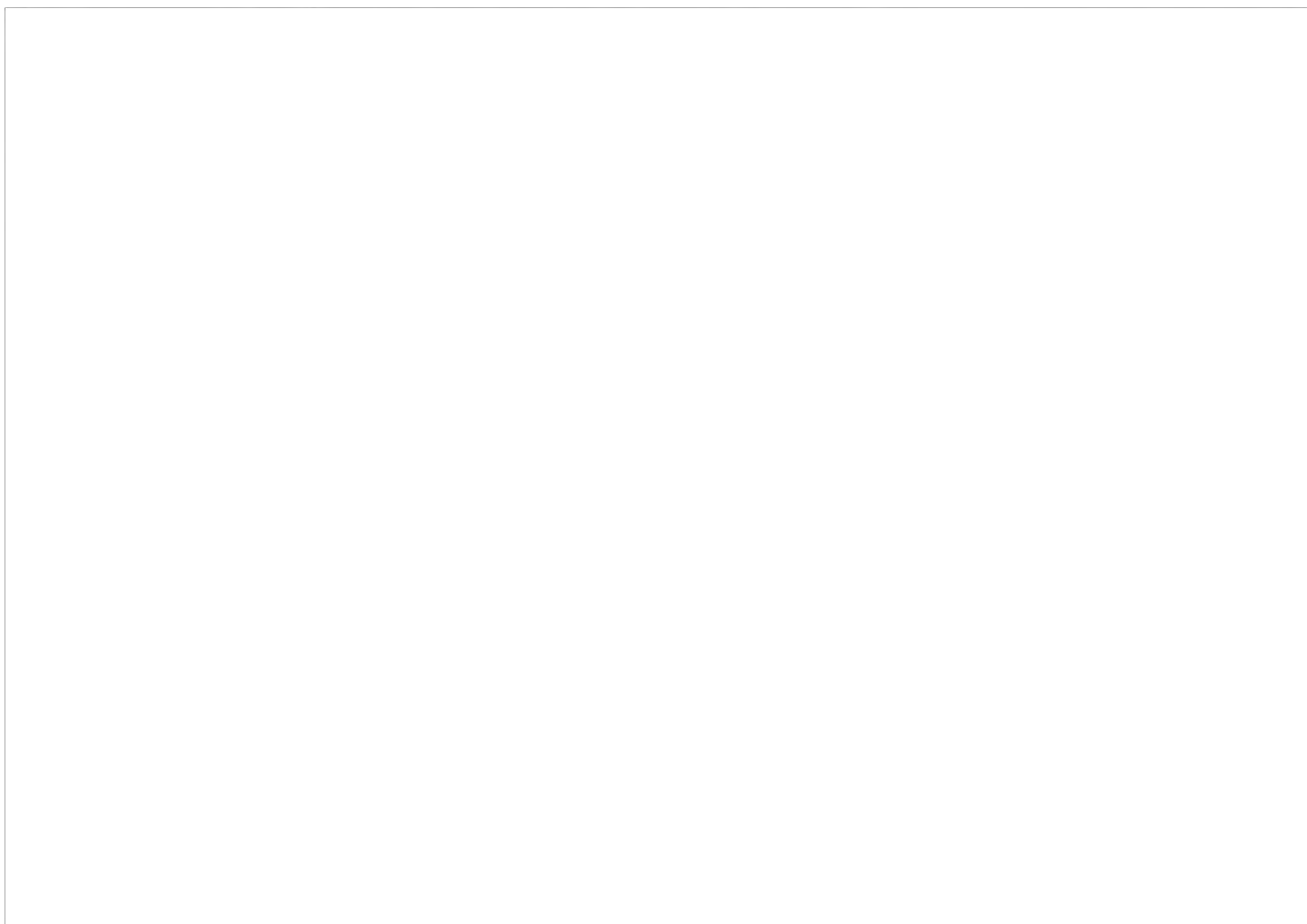
~~Top Secret~~ 8 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
8 MAY 1968

1. France

Despite De Gaulle's warning that such things will not be tolerated, student demonstrations began again early this morning in Paris. This time the students tried to march on the Sorbonne but were pushed back by police. Yesterday's disturbances left 800 policemen and students wounded.

The students, whose political views range across the whole spectrum, have so far been concerned only with educational reform and alleged police brutality. They have no discernible political goals, although there is always the possibility that the sensitive issue of Vietnam will crop up in the disturbances.

2. Soviet Union

Satellite photography of late April has provided an excellent view of the Soviet Union's most important submarine construction facility. We believe that 12 Polaris-type submarines were then in the yard's construction hall, and there are indications in the photographs that the Soviets were getting ready to launch one of them. Two others of the same type were in the yard's fitting-out area, and sections of a 15th boat appeared ready to be moved into the hall. As reported earlier, the first of this class has turned up at an operational base.

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3. Egypt-Israel

In a long conversation with Robert Anderson, Nasir was friendly and somewhat more forthcoming on the Arab-Israeli question than he has been in public. Among other things, he made the following points:

--He said indirect talks under Jar-ring's auspices about a settlement with Israel would be acceptable. He reiterated that the direct negotiations which Israel is demanding are out of the question.

--He said he would not give up "an inch" of Egyptian territory and that Sinai would have to be returned to Egypt. For Gaza, which was never a formal part of Egyptian territory, he said he would go along with almost any solution which did not involve an Israeli takeover.

--He showed a willingness to open the Suez Canal to Israeli goods and even Israeli ships, but only in gradual stages and only if there was progress on the Arab refugee question.

--He said that before diplomatic relations with the US could be restored, there would have to be some more positive statement from the US supporting the implementation of last November's Security Council resolution.

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4. Egypt -
Soviet Union

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5. Nigeria

Two or more states in French-speaking Africa may soon recognize the Biafran secessionists. There is little doubt that their decision to recognize was stimulated partly by pressure from the French, who have been fishing quietly in Nigeria's troubled waters for some time. Tanzania, which three weeks ago became the first state to recognize Biafra, also had some French encouragement.

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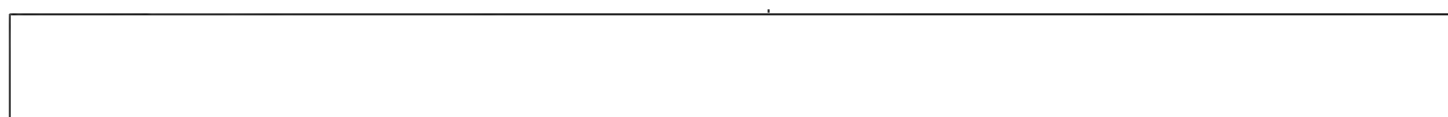
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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

8 May 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi's Delegation: French press reports from Hanoi say that Hanoi's chief negotiator in Paris, Xuan Thuy, will be assisted by four principal aides. The first named aide is Ha Van Lau, the man Hanoi probably had in mind for the initial "contact" phase of discussions with the US. Now that Hanoi has telescoped the "contacts" and the substantive "talks," both Lau and Xuan Thuy have been included in the delegation. Ha Van Lau may still be the man for the initial part of the Paris talks. He arrived in Paris yesterday.

The other three top aides are Nguyen Than Le, an editor of Nhan Dan; Nguyen Minh Vy, another press type whose current job is head of the government's information service; and Phan Hien, a career foreign service officer described as head of the Foreign Ministry's "American Department."

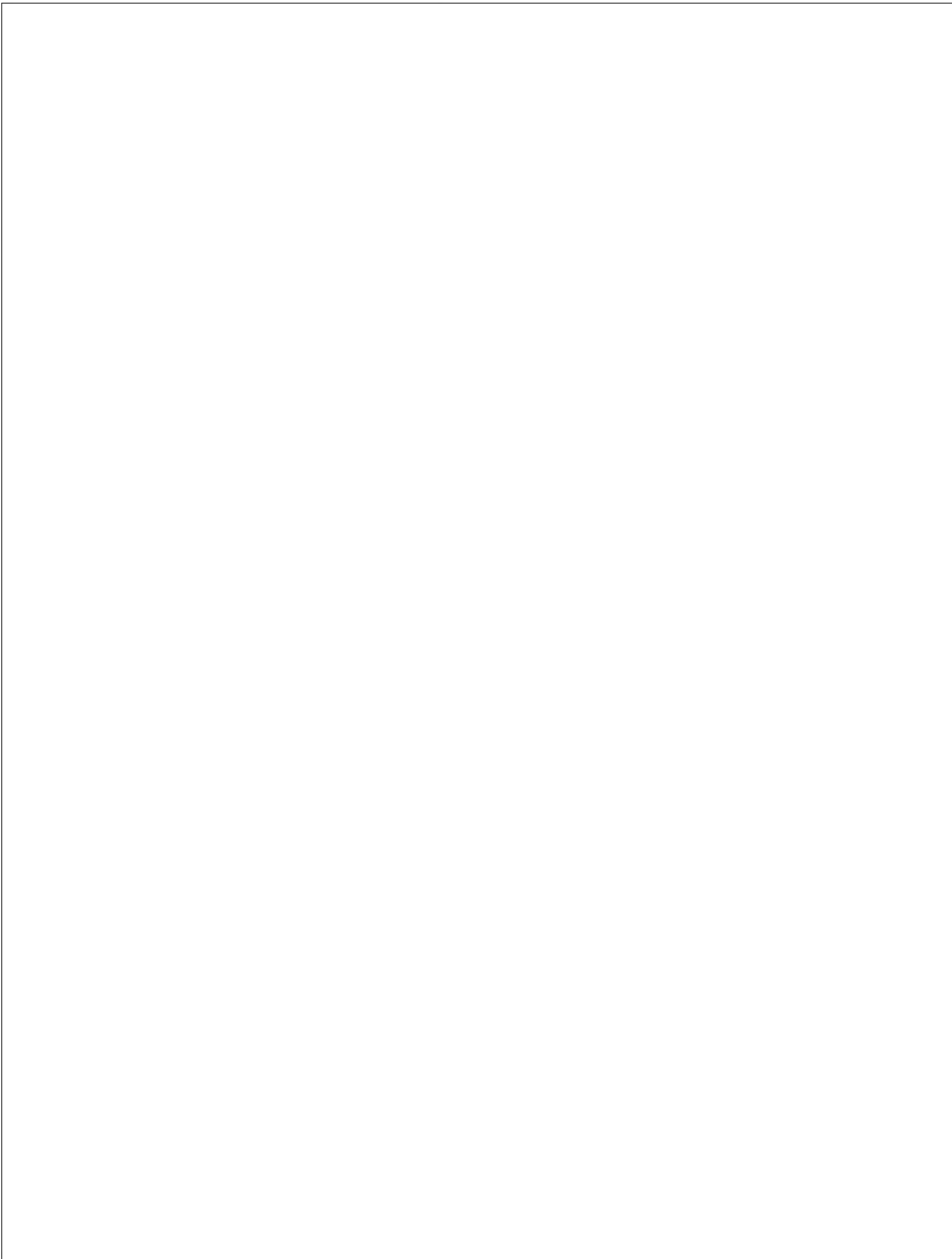
Our embassy reports that the Communists are looking for two large villas outside Paris to house the delegation. They are bringing a full complement of cooks, chauffeurs, and the like, in preparation for a long stay.

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North Vietnamese Arrivals in Paris: Ha Van Lau, who led a contingent of 23 North Vietnamese arriving in Paris yesterday, told assembled newsmen that he is "optimistic" about the coming talks. Xuan Thuy is still expected in Paris around noon tomorrow. He left Hanoi yesterday morning and plans short stopovers in Peking and Moscow. The French have been informed that Hanoi's total delegation will have 45 people.

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Soviet Propaganda on Paris Talks: Soviet propaganda media have begun to swing into action supporting the approaching peace talks in Paris, while continuing to stress the need for a cessation of all

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acts of war against North Vietnam. A Moscow domestic commentary termed the coming talks "very gratifying," and the 6 May edition of Pravda reportedly stated that "favorable prospects" have been created to end "the dirty American war."

The Soviets give all credit to Hanoi for bringing these talks about, of course, and keep referring back to Hanoi's "initiative" of 3 April, ignoring President Johnson's initiative of 31 March. Moscow naturally condemns Washington's "twisting and turning" to avoid talks and hails the "farsighted and realistic" position of the North Vietnamese.

Soviet radio commentaries remind their listeners, however, that the first order of business must be the unconditional halt of bombing and acts of war against North Vietnam. A Moscow domestic commentary on 5 May points out that it is "inconceivable" that further progress toward a peaceful settlement can be made until this "minimum demand" is fulfilled.

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North Vietnam Port Improvements Under Way:
The Soviet Union is aiding in a wharf extension project in Haiphong which should provide at least one new berth and allow the Vietnamese to dock nine ships at once in Haiphong. The construction effort probably is aided by some diversion of laborers previously committed to making bomb damage repairs in the port area.

Silting problems which have long been untended at Haiphong are now also being corrected. A large suction dredge, supplied by the Soviets in the 1950s, has recently appeared for the first time since 1965, probably from sanctuary in China. This dredge will probably be used to deepen the main channel, allowing heavily laden ships to enter the harbor.

The bombing halt may also allow the Vietnamese to reorganize cargo handling procedures. Work time is no longer being lost to frequent air raids and work can now be done both day and night.

Reconstruction of the permanent petroleum storage facility and pier, which were almost completely destroyed in 1965, may begin soon.

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Hanoi Observes Anniversary of Dien Bien Phu:
Hanoi newspapers published special issues on 7 May to commemorate the anniversary of Dien Bien Phu. The army daily pushed hard at comparisons between the battles at Dien Bien Phu and the current fighting in the South. The message was that the Americans were no more menacing than the French, and the Communists today are much stronger militarily than they were in the 1950s. Dien Bien Phu was a "world renowned" Vietnamese victory, claimed the propaganda, and serves as a source of inspiration to the Liberation army today. The party daily described the past three months as a period of

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continuing military offensive for the Viet Cong--
"the almost 100 days since the Tet offensive have
seen wave upon wave of attacks on dozens of cities,
provincial capitals and military bases" and the
"liberation" of large numbers of people and towns.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report to-
day.

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